

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 CU-04

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7347

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

AMCONSUL BUKAVU POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 12109

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINR, CG

SUBJECT: LABOR DISCONTENT IN ZAIRE

REF: A) KINSHASA 10494, 1976; B) KINSHASA 10901; C) KINSHASA 11174

1. SUMMARY: LABOR UNREST BY PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS CONTINUES TO SMOLDER IN KINSHASA AND TO SPREAD INTO THE INTERIOR. HOWEVER, THE THREAT OF A REPETITION OF LAST DECEMBER'S LABOR AGITATION OVER YEAR-END BONUSES, AND OF ITS POSSIBLE FUSION WITH A TEACHER STRIKE, HAS NOT MATERIALIZED. INSTEAD, A WORK SLOW-DOWN HAS BEGUN TO AFFECT THE PUBLIC SECTOR. END SUMMARY.

2. MOST KINSHASA TEACHERS HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR CLASS-ROOMS IN RESPONSE TO THE GOZ'S THREAT OF MASSIVE DISMISSALS AND ITS PROMISE TO NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH ONCE THE TEACHERS WERE BACK ON THE JOB. HOWEVER, MANY TEACHERS REFUSE TO DO MORE THAN SIT PASSIVELY AT THEIR DESKS DURING REGULAR SCHOOL HOURS UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT REACTS POSITIVELY TO THEIR GRIEVANCES. AFTER HOURS, MANY REPORTEDLY
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ARE CHARGING FEES FOR SUPPLEMENTARY CLASSES WHICH ARE TWO TO TEN TIMES THE LEGAL RATE. SOME ALSO REFUSE TO CORRECT EXAMINATIONS UNTIL PAID YET ANOTHER FEE BY EACH STUDENT. THESE TEACHERS ARE THUS COPING WITH THEIR IMPOSSIBLY LOW SALARIES IN A FASHION SIMILAR TO THAT OF SOME GENDARMES: BY VICTIMIZING ORDINARY CITIZENS. THEIR TACTICS HAVE BEEN ATTACKED IN THE GOVERNMENT-

CONTROLLED PRESS. ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION (UNTZA), HOWEVER, THE PUBLIC STILL HOLDS THE GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN THE TEACHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE AND OTHER ASPECTS OF DISORDER IN THE SCHOOLS.

3. THE TEACHERS' STRIKE CONTINUES TO SPREAD TO OTHER PARTS OF ZAIRE. IT HAS REACHED MBUJI MAYI IN KASAI ORIENTAL. OUR CONSULATE IN BUKAVU REPORTS THAT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT KIVU HAVE BEEN AFFECTED, BUT THAT THE UNIVERSITY BRANCHES THERE STILL FUNCTION NORMALLY. IN SHABA, ONLY SCHOOLS IN LUBUMBASHI HAVE THUS FAR BEEN CLOSED BY THE STRIKE. HOWEVER, A SEPARATE STRIKE BY UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS THERE CONTINUES TO BE SUPPORTED BY MANY ASSISTANT PROFESSORS AND THE ENTIRE FACULTY OF LETTERS. ACCORDING TO THE LUBUMBASHI CONSULATE, GOZ FAILURE TO COME UP WITH ACCEPTABLE SOLUTIONS COULD PROVOKE A MORE SERIOUS CONFRONTATION AT THE UNIVERSITY ON THE EVE OF EXAMINATIONS IN FEBRUARY. SIGNIFICANTLY, CONSULATE LUBUMBASHI REPORTS THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO RECENT WORK STOPPAGE AT EITHER GECAMINES OR SNCZ DESPITE THE FACT THAT NEITHER HAS GRANTED WAGE INCREASES THIS YEAR. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THE WORK STOPPAGES IN 1976 BEGAN WITH THESE TWO COMPANIES.

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4. THE THREAT OF A REPETITION OF LAST DECEMBER'S LABOR AGITATION OVER YEAR-END BONUSES (REF A) HAS NOT YET MATERIALIZED, APPARENTLY BECAUSE OF A CHANGE IN GOZ POLICY. LAST YEAR THE GOVERNMENT INITIALLY SOUGHT TO BAR ALL BONUSES TO PARASTATAL EMPLOYEES. THIS YEAR THE GOZ REPORTEDLY HAS AGREED TO ALLOW PARASTATAL FIRMS WHICH CAN AFFORD THE BONUSES TO GRANT THEM; IT IS NOT CUSTOMARY TO GRANT 13TH MONTH BONUSES TO GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. IN THE CRITICAL PARASTATAL TRANSPORTATION SECTOR, WHERE LABOR STRIFE WAS GREATEST LAST DECEMBER, AT THE NATIONAL OFFICE FOR TRANSPORTATION (ONATRA) WORKERS HAVE RECEIVED THE BONUS. (FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS ONATRA IS OPERATING AT A PROFIT.) EMPLOYEES OF THE NATIONAL OFFICE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT (OTCZ) BUS COMPANY, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE THREATENING TO STRIKE BECAUSE THE DEBT-RIDDEN FIRM CANNOT AFFORD THE EXTRA SALARY PAYMENT. A STRIKE BY OTCZ BUS DRIVERS, DURING THE WAVE OF LABOR UNREST LAST AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, WAS BRIEF AND WITHOUT EFFECT.

5. UNABLE TO EXPRESS SAFELY THEIR DISCONTENT OVER DECLINING REAL WAGES BY STRIKING, SOME PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES HAVE CHOSEN INSTEAD TO STAGE WORK SLOW-DOWNS.

AT THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FOR EXAMPLE,
THE NEVER RAPID PACE OF WORK HAS SLOWED PERCEPTIBLY.
OTHER DEPARTMENTS REPORTEDLY AFFECTED INCLUDE POST
AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC HEALTH. UNTZA
OFFICIALS PREDICT THAT THE PUBLIC SECTOR AS A WHOLE WILL
SUFFER A STEADY DECLINE IN PRODUCTIVITY UNTIL THE GOZ
IS ABLE TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT GESTURE ON WAGES.

6. CONCLUSION. FACED WITH FESTERING WORKER DISCONTENT, THE GOZ
CAN TAKE SOME SATISFACTION IN HAVING AVOIDED THUS FAR
A MAJOR LABOR CRISIS. THE COMPARATIVE CALM OF KINSHASA
IS OF COURSE OF GREATER POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE THAN THE
SPREAD OF THE TEACHERS' STRIKE TO THE INTERIOR, WHERE
LABOR UNREST USUALLY HAS LITTLE IMPACT ON THE STABILITY
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OF THE REGIME. MOBUTU'S PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUING INDEFINITELY TO
STRETCH OUT KINSHASA'S CURRENT LULL IN LABOR AGITATION, HOWEVER,
ARE NOT PROMISING.

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